



# Linking interviewer 'speed' with interviewer effect on answer content

European Social Survey: Achieving rigour Through Face-to-Face Survey

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# “Achieving rigour through face-to-face survey”

- Advantages of face-to-face surveys:
  - Better coverage than telephone or Web surveys
  - Higher response rate
  - Better data quality
    - interviewers can help respondents to navigate through the questionnaire
    - probe answers
    - keep the respondents motivated
    - But...

# Interviewer effects

- The interviewer influences the respondents' answers
  - Influence on respondent 'satisficing'
    - Regulated by performance ability, **task difficulty, motivation** (Krosnik et al., 1996)
    - Straight-lining, acquiescence, extreme response styles
  - Social desirability:
    - response behavior exhibited by respondents as a mean to project a favorable image of themselves that maximizes social conformity and minimizes negative judgement by others
  - ...

→ **Standardized interviewing principle to minimize interviewer effects**

# Standardized interviewing principle

- Standardized interviewing principle exists for a long time but interviewer effects are still detected in survey data
- Idea: Using interview length as **quality indicator, indicator of compliance to standard interviewing**
- Under the standardized interview principle, interview length should only depend on the respondent's
  - cognitive abilities
  - characteristics that may influence filter questions

# “Interviewer orientated analysis of interview length”

- Research has shown **large interviewer effects on interview length** (Hox, 1994, Japen 2005, Loosveldt and Beullens 2013a/b, Olson and Peytchev 2007, Turner et al. 2015)
- This shows that the **implementation of standard interviewing** is not evident

# Interview lengths and interviewer speed

- Interviewer speed as an interviewer characteristic:
  - Interviewers that perform short interviews  
← **Fast** interviewers
  - Interviewers that perform mean length interviews  
← **Standard** interviewers
  - Interviewers that perform long interviews  
← **Slow** interviewer

# Relation standardized interviewing and interviewer speed

- Four basic principles (Floyd and Flower 1984)
  1. Read the question exactly as written
  2. React to inappropriate answers in a standardized and nondirective way
  3. Record only answers of respondent, no discretion from interviewer
  4. Interact with respondent in non-biasing way, refrain from giving personal information or opinion about answers

→ Deviations can influence interview length (skipping questions, simplifying them, giving inappropriate explanations, engaging in conversation with resp.)

# Relation standardized interviewing and interviewer speed: hypotheses

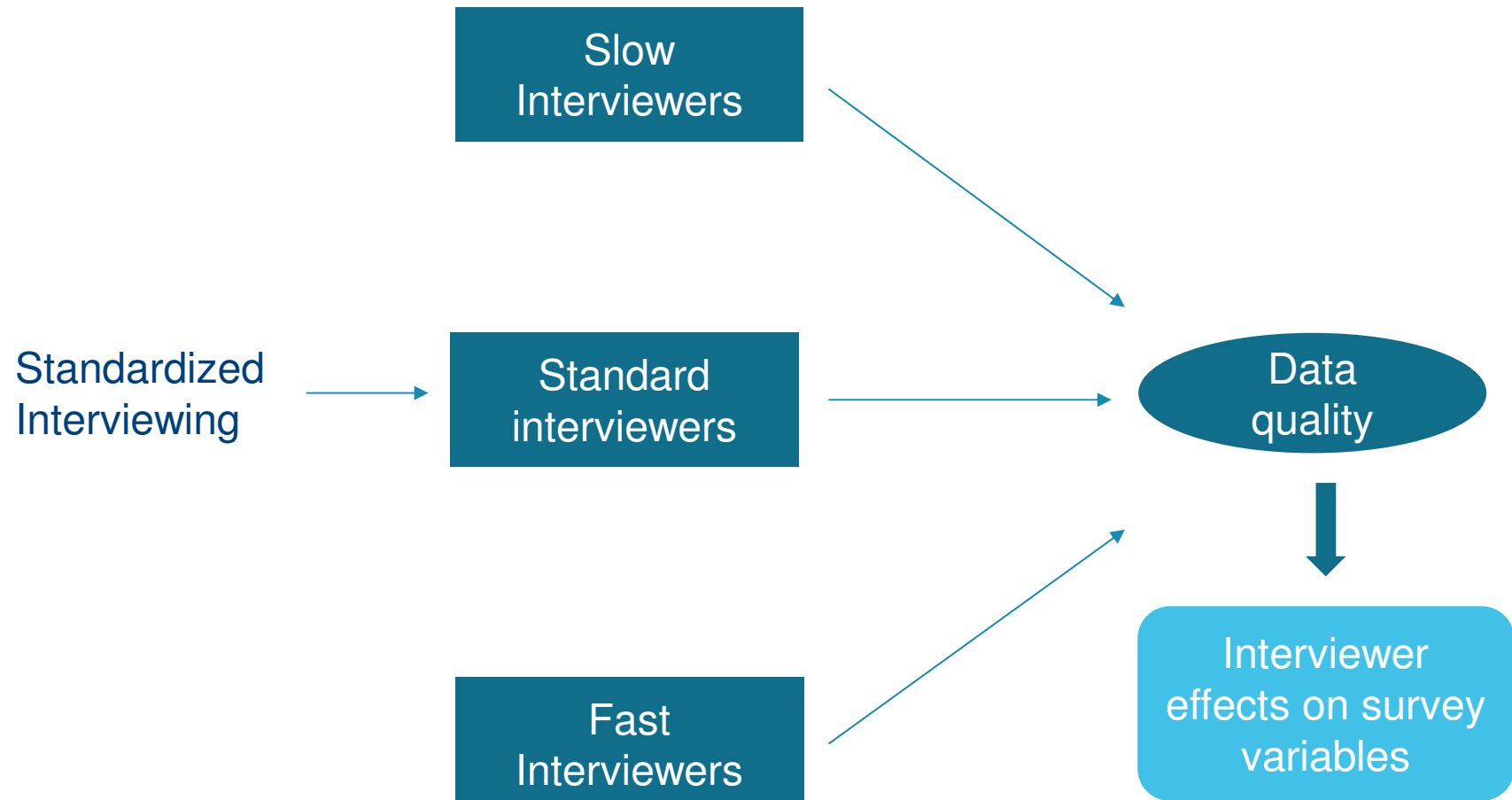
- Interviewer orientated analysis of interview length: interview length linked to interviewing style
  - Slow interviewers ~ conversational style
  - Standard interviewers ~ standardized interviewing
  - Fast interviewers ~ Interviewer 'satisficing'



# Research questions

- Is there a relation between the interviewer 'speed' and interviewer effect on data quality?
- In particular, do 'slow' and 'fast' interviewers give rise to more interviewer effects on survey variables than 'standard' interviewers?

# Research questions



# Standardized interviewing in ESS

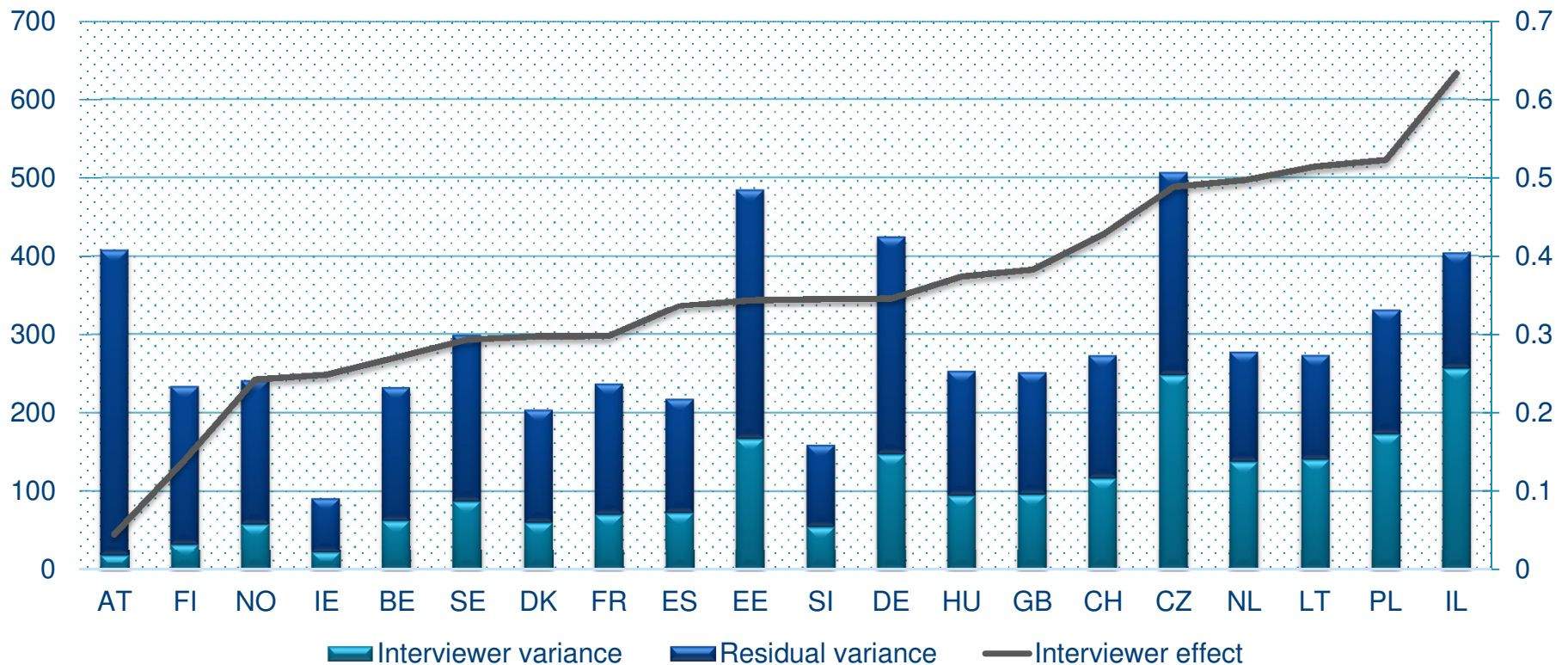
The European Social Survey..

- adheres to the standardized interviewing principle.
- publishes 'best practice guidelines' on
  - doorstep interaction
  - general set-up and behaviour
  - asking questions
  - and reacting to respondents' answers

Compliance to these guidelines should reduce interviewer effects both on interview length and on variables' content.

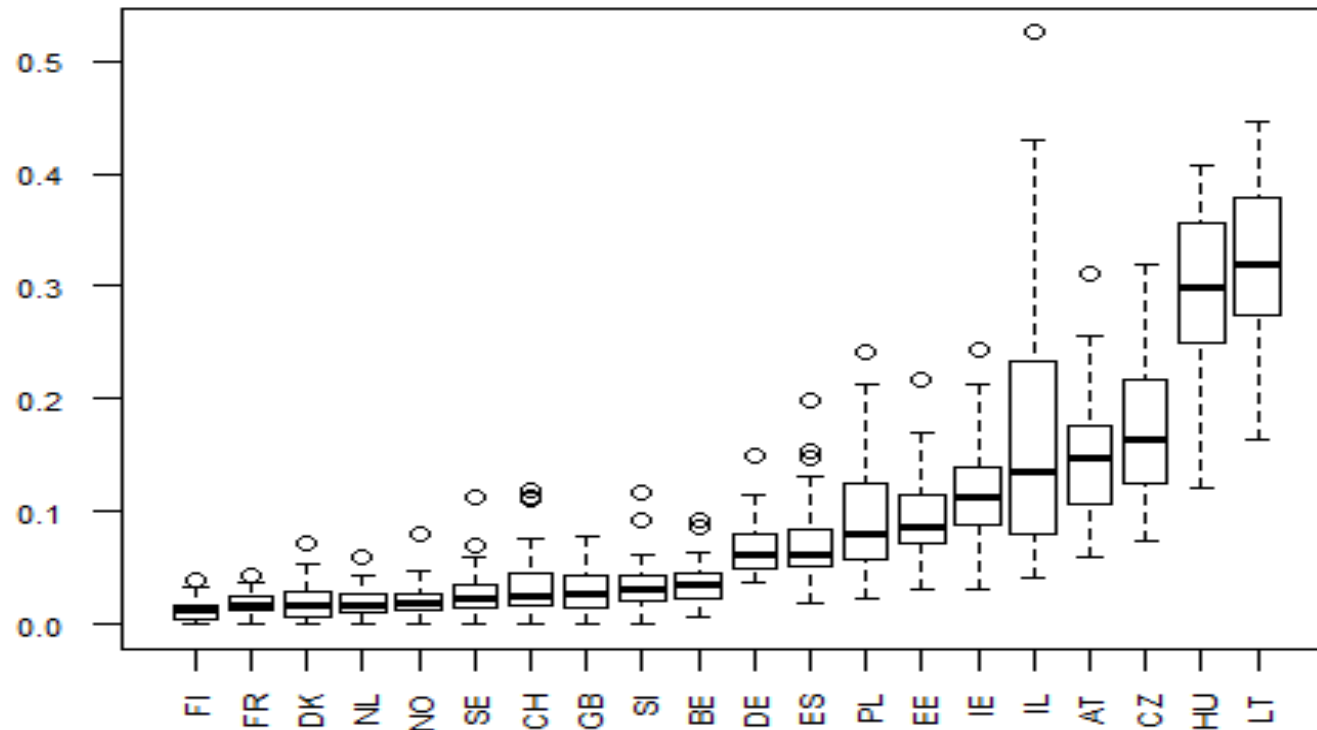
# Round 7, 20 countries considered

## Interview length variance and proportion interviewer variance



# Interviewer effects on survey variables

**Interviewer effects over the target variables by cntry**



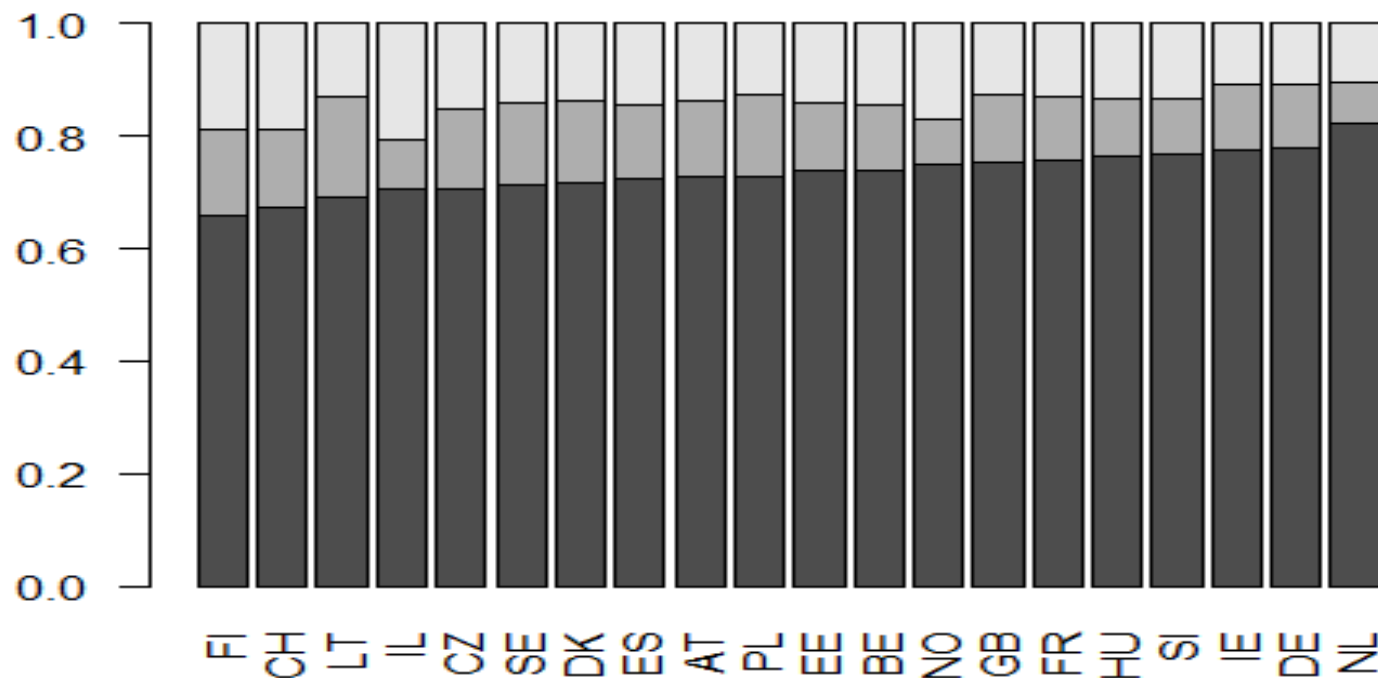
All 10-point scale variables of the ESS R7 questionnaires

# Linking interviewer 'speed' and interviewer effects on survey variables...

## Methodology:

- Interviewer 'speed' measure: median of performed interview lengths
- In each country, we define three groups of interviewers,
  - **Slow**: interviewer 'length' is larger than the mean interview length + one standard deviation
  - **Standard**: interviewer 'length' is between – and + one standard deviation of the mean interview length
  - **Fast**: interviewer 'length' is smaller than the mean interview length - one standard deviation

## Linking interviewer 'speed' and interviewer effects on target variables...



# Linking interviewer 'speed' and interviewer effects on specific variables...

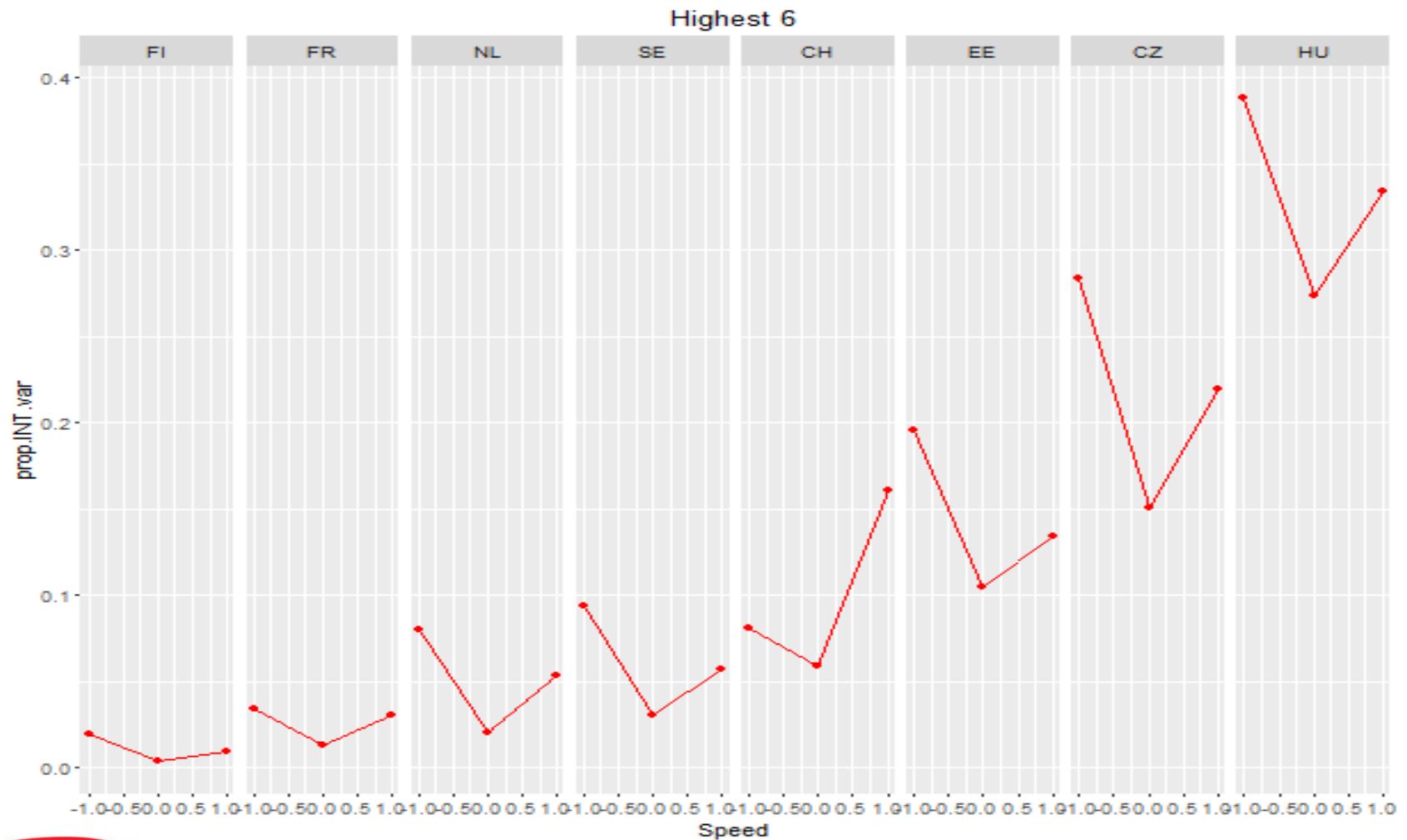
- We consider the six variables that suffer the most from interviewer effects across countries (highest median):
  - QFMLING (Qualification for immigration: speak countries official language),
  - QFMEDU (Qualification for immigration: good educational qualification),
  - QFMCMT (Qualification for immigration: committed to way of life in cntry),
  - LWDSCWP (Law against ethnic discrimin. in work place good for country),
  - IMBLEGO (Taxes and services: immigrants take out more than they put in),
  - PPLHLP (People are helpful)



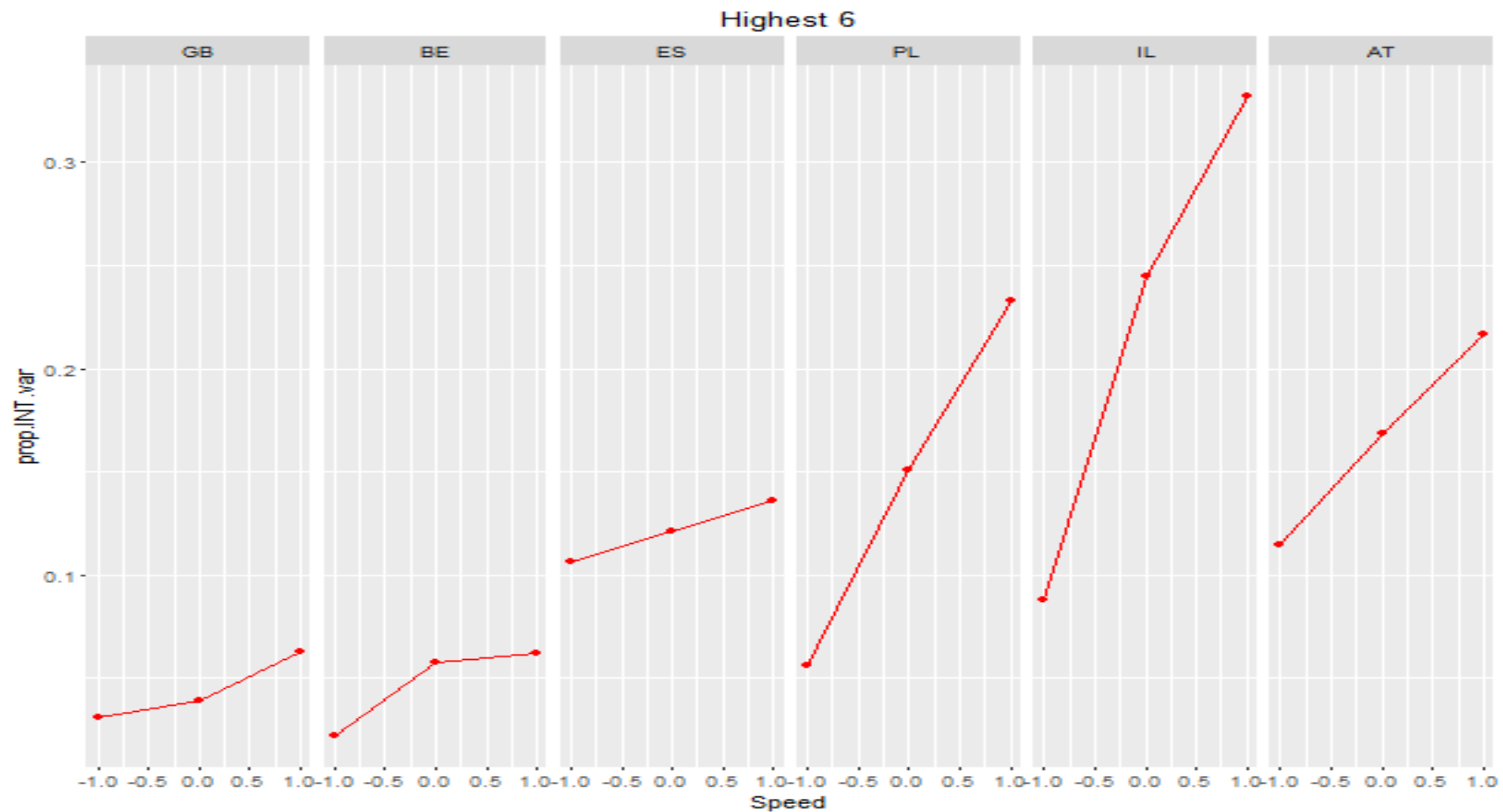
# Linking Interviewer 'speed' and interviewer effects on specific variables...

- In each country for each group of interviewers, interviewer effects on the six most affected variables.
- Expectations:
  - lower interviewer effects in standard group, optimal lengths, standardized interviews
  - Higher interviewer effects in slow and fast groups, deviations from standardized interviews

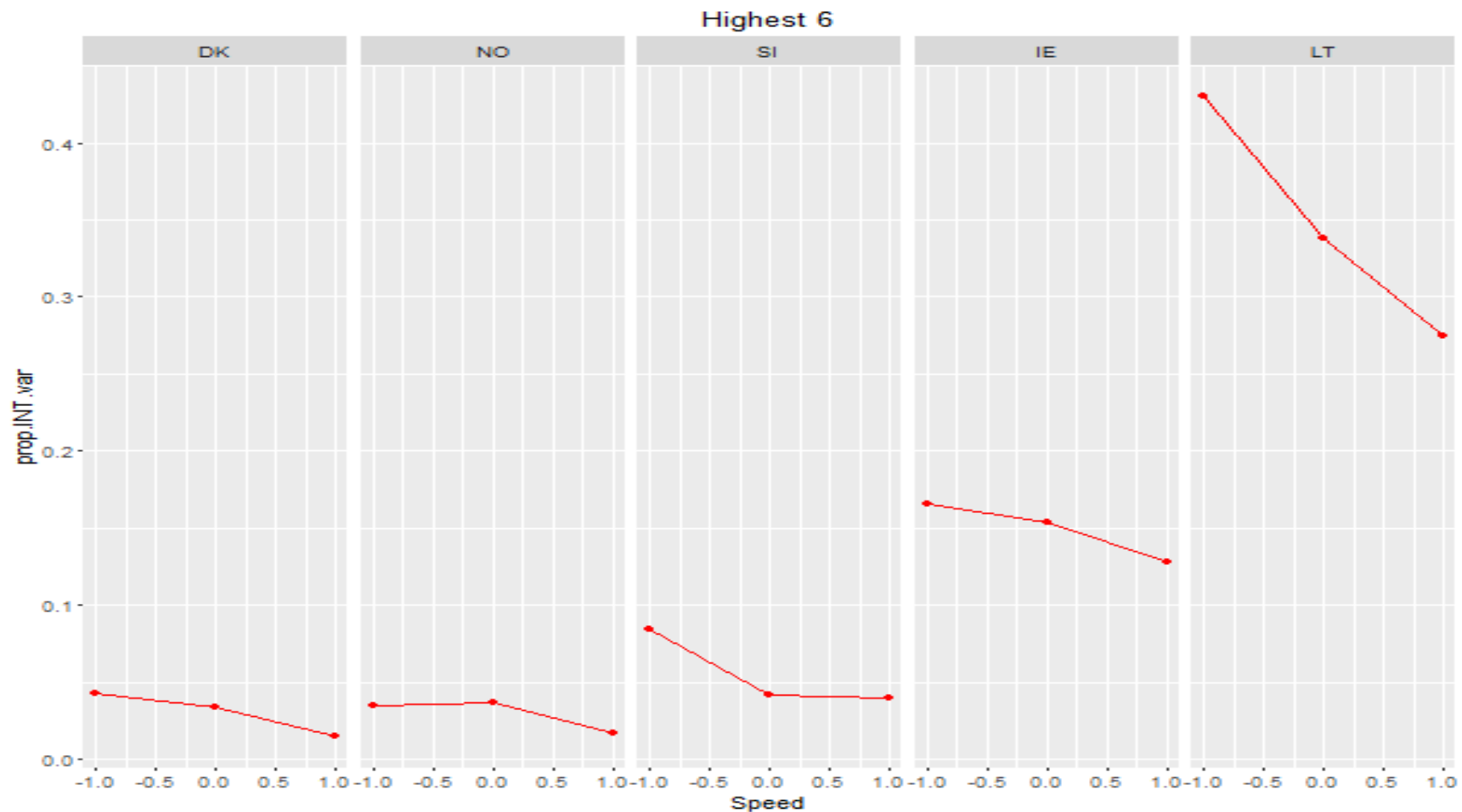
# Results: 8 countries behave as expected



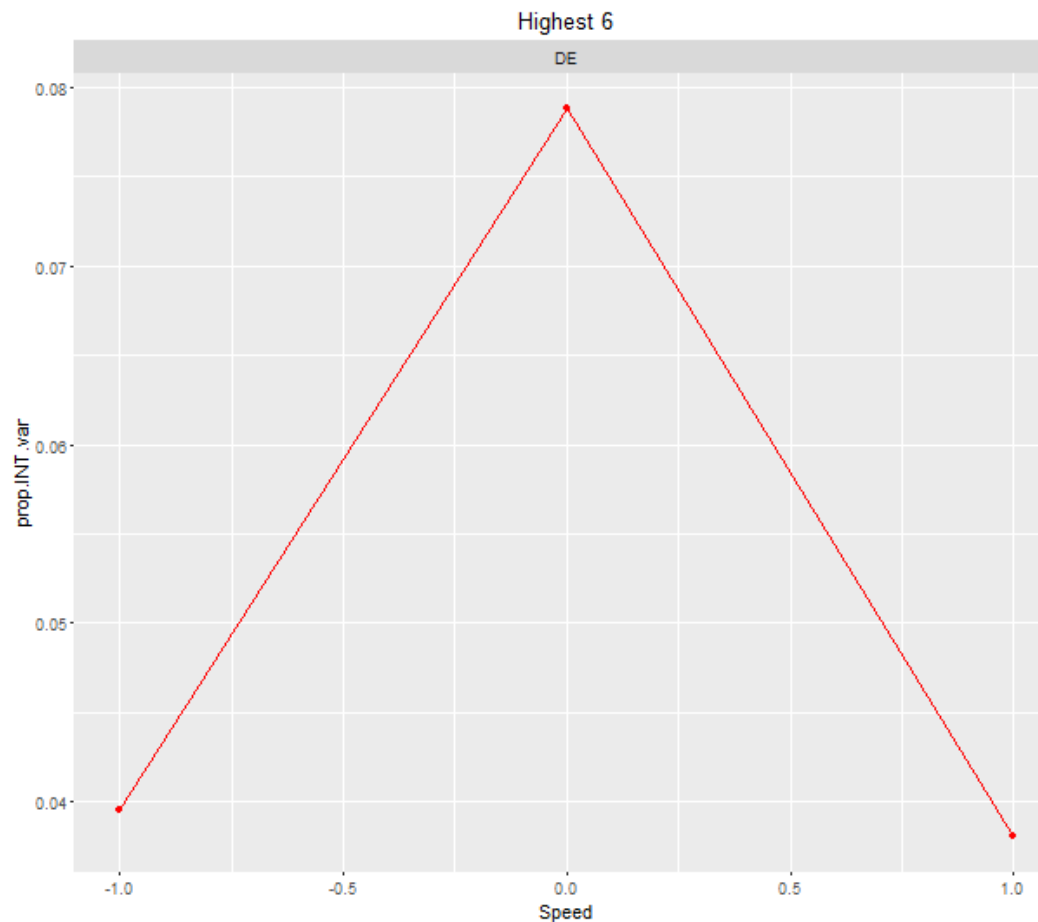
# Results: 6 countries with IE increasing with interviewer 'length'



# Results: 5 countries with IE decreasing with interviewer 'length'



Results: Germany has an inversed V shape..



# Discussion

- Is interviewer 'speed' related to data quality and, in particular, to interviewer effects on content variables?
  - In almost all countries, there is a relation between interviewer speed and interviewer effects
- In particular, do 'slow' and 'fast' interviewers give rise to more interviewer effects on survey variables than 'normal' interviewers?
  - Not obvious in all countries, different patterns observed
    - 8 countries have a V shape as expected
    - 6 have increasing interviewer effects with interviewer speed
    - 5 have decreasing interviewer effects with interviewer speed

# Discussion

- Possible explanations:
  - Different survey 'cultures' in the different countries
    - Invitation to further study the possible reasons for the different patterns observed between countries
  - Need for a refinement of the measure of interviewer speed:
    - Operationalization, the mean interviewer length is taken as the optimal length  $\leftarrow$  IE, SI, take 60 minutes
    - Control for respondents characteristics/ country specific questions?

Thank you!

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